

**Linda Clair**  
**Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2020**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 6C – Thursday afternoon discussion session**

Question: I just wanted to ask if you could give us a brief explanation of the Heart Sutra, just as a reminder? We are doing it every evening but probably not thinking much about what we are doing.

Linda: Well, that's good that you're not. And that's the reason for it.

I've never been really into a lot of chanting. In a Japanese monastery they do do a lot of chanting – I've got no idea what it's about. With the heart sutra I've always just liked the energetic feeling of it – and it has got the English translation (on the back of the sheet).

Really, it's just saying, "This is it, now, there's nothing except this." But for me it's just got this energetic vibration when it's chanted in Japanese. Last retreat I decided to have a break from it and there was a huge revolt. (Laughter) So we've reinstated it because even people who didn't like it missed it. It's just very simple.

Question: So do not overthink?

Linda: Yes, don't think. Just enjoy it energetically. And it's very different to Indian chanting because that's very melodic and it's got all the instruments with it. But Zen chanting is quite different – you just do it...

Linda: E. you're leaning right over to the left. Are you aware you're doing that? (Yes.) I haven't seen you do it quite that way before. It's different.

Question: No, it's just been doing it the whole retreat... I've tried shifting the zafu and all sorts of things. I've been through it before.

Linda: Ohh. Sometimes it's just a stage. I haven't seen you leaning quite that far and your head. Sometimes I feel like not saying anything for a while because you can tend to get a bit obsessed but it's probably just an energetic stage.

Question: I think somebody asked earlier this retreat what to do when they're leaning and you said to just come back; straighten up. So that's what I'm doing.

Linda: Yes, if you're aware, just straighten up but you will probably go over again.

Question: It's a matter of degree isn't it?

Linda: It's about thirty degrees. (Laughing)

Question: So you think you're going over a bit and then you think, "Oh, I'm just imagining it."

Linda: No, it will pass. As everything, it will pass

Question: I don't know what it's going to be like in the front row but the closer I get the more I'm shaking and the more I'm crying. I've got fluttery-heart symptoms now, which are beginning to make me a little nervous. I don't know if that's a physiological thing to be mindful of or whether that's just fear.

Linda: It tends to happen a bit. Some people get it more than others and they do get a bit concerned about it at times. Is your heart okay? (Yes.) It's usually just an energetic thing. I'd say don't worry about it.

If you feel really nauseous and a bit faint maybe put your head down. But at what stage is it that you should do that? With the nausea, if you do get it, breathe into it, like I was saying to someone else. Just try and do that. And yes, just see how you go.

It's why you need to prepare your body for this. It's all about the body and preparing the body for it.

Question: When you mentioned to start the belly breath, something just took over and did it itself – it just does it on its own now. And the counting is really good too. So anytime I get a little...

Linda: Overwhelmed?

Question: Yes, a little bit. Then I just go back to that and it does its own thing. It's very powerful.

Linda: So sometimes it's good to even *over* accentuate the breathing: you breathe out a bit more, so it's more deliberate, especially when you're feeling a bit overwhelmed by anything – energy, whatever – do that. And the counting is also a really good thing to do.

Question: Yes, that's really good. And I find if I start to slump, it seems to correct my posture; it kind of pushes me up. And when the posture is straighter the whole thing works really well.

Linda: It does, and that also affects the fear because when we're fearful we tend to go down like this (slumping). So straightening up is like you're challenging that fear; challenging the mind, and saying, "I'm going to stay here straight. Nothing is going to get me down." Well, you might get knocked down but then you come up again.

Question: Yes, it feels like that. And then that great (lifting up) which is quite powerful anyway on its own – the muscles that are working are really strong.

Linda: Good.

Question: I was feeling just then a lovely sense of peace and I haven't been feeling it in the sitting. I've had a lot of discomfort around my gut area and back. But I went and had a rest at the break and realised I felt really calm in the whole centre part of me, and I thought, "Oh, that's lovely. Something's gone. A lot of things have gone." So I came and did the sitting and thought, "Oh, I'm

going to be a good one now!” And it wasn’t; it was hard work! (Laughing) But once I stopped there’s again this lovely sense of peace, of being stable and peaceful inside. That whole chest and gut area – which when I started sitting, doing some Vipassana, I had no sensation there at all – I couldn’t feel it... So that whole area has taken a long time to become unblocked. And I do know the things that have gone: an intense, long-held grief has gone in the last six months... And anger has gone. I knew I’d been angry – it’s not usually what I do – but it was in there before. I realised that with something I would have reacted to before – the anger wasn’t there. And a lot more peace and joy generally, which has been beautiful. So something else has shifted or gone. I have no idea what it is but there’s greater ease in that whole area. And I’m really grateful for it and for your teaching.

Linda: Thanks. Well, you’ve put in the work. Yes, we work together.

Question: About the resting without sleeping that you suggested to D. earlier, to rest with no stimulation like not reading and so on. I tried to do it at home but I always reach for a cup of tea or a book or whatever – there was still that momentum; I still needed something. But since I’ve been here – just through, I don’t know what – going in the room it’s such a deep rest. It’s almost like I haven’t had it that deep before without saying, “Okay, I’m going to go to sleep now.”

Linda: It’s a great thing to do isn’t it?

Question: Yes, it’s just so beautiful. When I heard people a few retreats ago say, “Vibration,” or something I’d always think, “Oh, I never feel that. I’ve just got to trust that what I’m doing is okay for me – I don’t know what vibration is.” But just going on the bed like that with no expectation of anything, there’s all sorts of pinging and ponging around in the body. And it’s been a really different thing to have, as part of the sitting practice really, for me.

Linda: Yes, it is. All those little things are part of it – are it.

And I’ve actually seen that in you – there’s a significant lack of momentum there. I suppose it was because you worked so hard for years and years there was still that residual thing there. But it doesn’t seem like it’s there nearly as much as it was before. You seem much more settled and grounded.

Question: It has taken a while.

Linda: If you’re working for years in what you were doing it must get into you and be hard to just switch off and slow down.

Question: I’ve had some good mentors coming to the retreats. Even walking down the road, the trees and everything. You just can’t help but be open.

Question: Yesterday I had this experience while I was meditating – it was quite buzzy and energetic. I was sitting watching thoughts come up into consciousness, trying to look at them come up. I had this thought – some rubbish I can’t even remember what it was – but it was like a voice in my head and it was like you’re on the mobile phone with bad reception and it was breaking up. And the part of me watching was immediately going, “Wow, my mind is stopping.” And then I thought, “No, I’m *thinking* my mind is stopping therefore it can’t be stopping.” (Laughter) I became aware of all these subtle levels of thought. But then afterwards I was thinking, “Well, if I’m doing anything other than

just noticing, just being aware, that's still thinking." So if you're doing anything other than being purely aware without volition of any kind, does that mean your mind is still working, you're still thinking?

Linda: Yes. It's incredibly insidious. But don't get into that. As soon as you find yourself getting into that trap, just break it – use the sensations to break it. Otherwise you'll just go round and round and keep going. You see it and go, "Oh my god, this is awful." But, break it – come back. Try not to get into it too much.

Question: It's sort of a nightmare. It's like an infinite regression.

Linda: But it's not infinite – it's not. It appears to be that way but it's not. So use something much more tangible to break that momentum, and you need to keep doing it again and again.

And as I keep saying, it doesn't matter what you're thinking about – it really doesn't matter. It's that process of thinking, that movement that you need to see and then bring it back. Move back to where you are, which is in your body – wherever your body is – that's where you are, you're in your body. You're not anywhere else. You're not doing something else. You *can't* be somewhere else. So thinking is *pretending* that you're somewhere else. You think that you're going to make some experience better or deeper or something by thinking about it but you're just really separating yourself more and more from now. You're going further and further away from it.

Question: Fortunately I've got plenty of tangible knee pain at the moment to bring me back.

Linda: Well, that's the beauty of it. It's not that you are ever going to enjoy that, but in a way, you need to prefer that to being lost in your imagination and dream world. And it does become much more weirdly attractive, even if you're in pain. It means you're actually in your body – you're more alive, you actually feel something. Whereas thinking is like an anaesthetic, it's like you're anaesthetising everything. You're never really completely here and clear. It's like you're in cotton wool.

I've heard other people talk about that radio thing where it feels like you're tuned into a station and there's static. Yes, I've heard people say that before. One person in particular, he had it for years, off and on.

Question: We must be tuned in to the same station. (Linda laughs) It does make me think, though – if anything other than just pure awareness is thinking, then how can I speak? Like, the words I'm saying now I'm thinking about them before I say them, to an extent?

Linda: But you don't need to do that. I never prepare what I'm going to say, and particularly at the beginning of a retreat, I don't write down a speech that I'm going to say. I probably would never remember it anyway. So I just sit and start talking and it just comes out. And it's the same right now – all the time. There's not this delay where I think, "I'm going to say this," and then say it. I know in the past when I have done that it hasn't felt quite spontaneous and real anyway. So it is possible to talk without thinking. People think it's impossible but it's very, very possible to talk without thinking.

Question: Our politicians seem to be good at it. 😊

Linda: No, I think politicians are always calculating. They're trying to stay a step ahead.

And it's such a relief to realise you don't have to think. Gradually, gradually the belief that you need to think falls away and you go, "Oh, I *can* do this without thinking about it."

It's actually much more enjoyable and alive to do it without thinking about it. And then something else happens and then you start to realise gradually, gradually, you can live your whole life without thinking, and it's a totally different life.